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ALASKA COMES OF AGE

By Julius C. Edelstein

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THE PICTURE on the cover shows an American PBY (Catalina) patrol bomber on a patrol flight in Alaska. All photographs in this pamphlet are official U.S. Navy pictures.

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ALASKA COMES OF AGE

THE UNITED STATES, like a sharp Yankee trader, grumbled for years over the \$7,200,000 it paid in 1867 to the Imperial Russian Government for the vast Arctic wilderness known as Alaska. At the time it was a known fact and a national scandal that the Russian Ambassador, Baron Stoeckel, had spent \$200,000 to put over the Alaskan sale. In the end, of course, the Republican Senate approved the treaty of transfer, while independent and Democratic newspapers jeered and hooted at "Seward's Folly."

Secretary of State William H. Seward, who led the fight for the acquisition, either had unimaginable foresight or couldn't resist a tempting bargain. He was staunch in his defense of the deal, even in the face of persistent ridicule. But it is recorded that Baron Stoeckel went back to Russia, convinced that he had put something over on the venal Yankees. Most of Seward's fellow-Americans were just as convinced that it was money squandered, which could have been much more profitably invested in eastern post roads, or in subsidizing the new railways. 34128

In the years since then, there have been mountains of statistics to show that the United States has gotten out of Alaska, in return for its \$7,200,000: (1) \$1,000,000,000 worth of salmon and other fish seined from its waters; (2) \$800,000,000 worth of gold, copper and other minerals sluiced out of its streams and dug from its hills; (3) \$100,000,000 worth of furs trapped and shot in its great wildernesses.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I wish to express my thanks to Delegate Anthony J. Dimond and to Governor Ernest Gruening for their suggestions, advice and assistance in the preparation of this pamphlet.

J. C. E.

These facts and figures easily sustain Uncle Sam's historical reputation as an uncanny trader in international real estate. Next to the Louisiana purchase, the Alaskan acquisition has netted this country the greatest return in dollars and cents.

But today Alaska's value to the United States is no longer counted in terms of the fish, nuggets and furs that add to the national wealth and income. Alaska's current worth is the concern of strategists rather than of economists; upon the correct use of Alaska in our war plans may depend the fate of our times. The \$7,200,000 bargain the United States got from Russia in 1867 is now being described in the press and on the radio as the key to victory in the Pacific war. The Japanese thrust into the Aleutians in June 1942 shows how highly the enemy esteems the strategic importance of these north Pacific bases. The vigorous counter-measures finally undertaken by American forces show a belated but satisfactory understanding on our part.

Yet most Americans still know as little about Alaska as they did on October 18, 1867, when the Russian colors were formally struck, and the American flag raised over the fortifications at Sitka. To the frontier-minded Americans of that day, Alaska was just a colossal ice-box, full of strange snow-dwelling savages, though affording perhaps a convenient base for whalers. Eighty years later, most Americans have an impression of Alaska which is not much more accurate. Except for its new-found military significance, Alaska generally evokes a mental photomontage of gold, the Klondike rush, Eskimos and reindeer.

In modern times, the central fact of Alaska's development has been its complete isolation. It has been cut off from the rest of the world by barriers and ice and fog, of mountain and sea. Until very recently the only link between Alaska and the United States was the long and difficult sea route—1,033 miles from Seattle to Juneau. Alaska has remained relatively unpopulated and undeveloped. And now, not only the materials but even the labor to build its defenses must be brought in from the United States.

It is difficult, therefore, to appreciate Alaska's military signifi-



The Japanese attack on Dutch Harbor, June 1942. Marines on the alert between air raids. Note smoke from burning fuel tanks in background.

cance without some knowledge of the Territory's geography, its people, its economy, government and history. For all of these are military factors which must be taken into account in planning the defense of Alaska—or its use as an offensive base against Japan.

THE SEVEN ALASKAS

1. The Panhandle — southeastern Alaska.
2. The Cook Inlet-Copper River area — south central Alaska.
3. The Alaskan Peninsula-Aleutian Island chain.
4. The Bristol Bay area — southwestern Alaska.
5. Seward Peninsula.
6. Interior Alaska — Yukon River basin.
7. The Arctic slope — northern Alaska.

THE SEVEN ALASKAS

In Chinook—synthetic language invented by the old-time trappers for communication with the many-tongued northland Indians—the word *hy-oo* means large or vast. *Hy-oo* applies to almost everything about Alaska. Its mountains are the highest in North America, its glaciers the largest, its weather the coldest, its mosquitoes the most numerous.

The Territory of Alaska covers 586,000 square miles, roughly one-fifth as great as all of continental United States, and has 26,000 miles of coastline—considerably more than the United States. The distance from the westernmost point of Alaska to the easternmost is 2,300 miles, and from the northernmost to the southernmost is 1,400 miles. This accounts in part for the wide variety of climate, which ranges from the temperate to the very frigid, from desert-like dryness to continuous rain and snowfall, from humid fog to brilliant Arctic sparkle. Point Barrow, Alaska's northernmost point, is not nearly as cold as regions much farther south, though only a comparatively short distance from the Arctic ice pack and the North Pole. Alaska's southernmost point, in the Aleutians, is at about the same latitude as London, England.

The main body of Alaska, as seen on the map, reminds Alaskans of the profile of an old "sourdough." More prosaically, the Territory of Alaska has three main features: (1) the main body of land, almost touching Asia; (2) the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutians looping southwest from the mainland into Asiatic waters; and (3) the Panhandle, nestling against the Canadian Northwest (see map, pp. 32-33).

Alaska has no less than seven distinct geographic regions, presenting as much variety in climate, topography and land formation as the United States itself. This fact, so little understood even by expert military minds, is responsible for the frequent

miscalculation of the magnitude of the military problem presented by Alaska.

Strategically speaking, the most important areas are those on the southern rim of Alaska, and Seward Peninsula opposite Bering Strait. Their geography will be sketched here mainly from the viewpoint of their strategic qualities.

SEWARD PENINSULA

Two great indentations in Alaska's western face, Kotzebue Sound and Norton Sound, set off Seward Peninsula, whose western tip reaches to within 54 miles of Siberia across the narrows of Bering Straits. Here lies Nome, famous in gold-rush history, and today a strategic prize potentially much more precious than all the gold ever scooped from its sands.

The Seward Peninsula area is bleak and unlovely through the long months of autumn, winter and early spring. The surrounding waters of Bering Sea and the Straits freeze up tight by the end of October, and remain frozen until May. In winter the days are four hours long, and the ground ice forms over the land with a mighty crack, snapping concrete and wooden foundations as if they were twigs. Nome buildings lean askew as a result of the violent changes in temperature.

But in spring and summer the rich earth yields one of the loveliest displays of wild flowers known on the continent, although the ground itself never thaws beyond a depth of five feet. Between May and August, daylight never ends; the sun goes down in mid-summer for two hours at a time. Except for winter blizzards, the weather is fairly clear the year around. Commercial flights to the south are maintained on regular daily schedule.

INTERIOR ALASKA

The great Alaska mountain range sprawls at one point 150 miles across, forming a mighty barrier between the northern and

southern halves of the Territory, pierced occasionally by swift-flowing rivers and a few precipitous passes. At its northernmost extremity rises the grand height of Mount McKinley (20,300 feet), the highest peak on the American continent. Semi-independent mountain ranges like the Chugach, the Kenai and the Brooks further divide interior Alaska into a series of wilderness compartments, broken only by mountain trails and river gorges.

There is a sort of central plain along the valley of the 2,000-mile-long Yukon River, which rises high up in Canada's Yukon Territory, and flows westward across the entire breadth of Alaska into the Bering Sea. Along this river and its tributaries are most of the settlements and towns of interior Alaska. Fairbanks, the metropolis of this entire area, and the site of the first Army air station to be located in Alaska, is situated on the Tanana River, a branch of the magnificent Yukon. The Yukon, incidentally, is the second largest river on the North American continent.

KENAI PENINSULA

The southern side of Alaska presents to the Pacific Ocean a wide-sweeping arc, within whose arms lies the Gulf of Alaska. One of the arms of the arc is formed by the Alaskan Peninsula, the other extremity by the Panhandle and the coast of Canada. At the very center of this formation is the Kenai Peninsula, another of the strategic areas of Alaska. Kenai Peninsula is set off from the mainland by Cook Inlet.

The peninsula is mountainous, dotted with lakes and edged with great fjords, one of the most famous big-game areas of Alaska. On its southern front, facing the Gulf, are any number of fjords and inhospitable inlets leading to precipitous rocks and disaster. One inlet, looking not much different from most of the others, is Resurrection Bay, which President Warren G. Harding described in 1921 as "the finest harbor on the Pacific." The harbor belongs to the city of Seward, at the head of the bay, which is long, deep and completely sheltered. For many years Seward

was the shipping and rail terminus for cargo exchanged between the "outside" and interior Alaska. Today, in a military role it is serving a more important function.

At the head of Cook Inlet, on the tip of a land wedge formed by Turnagain Arm and Knik Arm, is Anchorage, headquarters of the Alaska Defense Command. Surrounded by gently rolling hills, and in the heart of the Territory's finest agricultural region, Anchorage could be almost any American boom town, undistinguished by either local geography or climate. At the moment it is a bedlam of pay-rich defense workers and soldiers, kicking up the dust of unpaved streets with the abandon of frontiersmen.

ALASKAN PENINSULA AND ALEUTIANS

South and west of the Kenai Peninsula, projecting from under Alaska's "chin," are the Alaskan Peninsula and the Aleutian chain, most famous of all Alaskan areas. From Katmai Mountains, at the head of the dagger-shaped Alaskan Peninsula, to Attu, westernmost of the Aleutians, is 1,500 miles—an almost continuous breakwater across the northern neck of the Pacific, across the 180th meridian to within a few hundred miles of Russia's Komandorski Islands, and within 600 miles of the Kamchatka Peninsula of Siberia. The International Date Line makes a sharp loop to the west to take in the last of the Aleutian Islands, and keep Alaska all within the same day. Thus just beyond Attu lies tomorrow.

There are really only nine or ten large islands in the arching Aleutian chain—Unalaska, Unimak, Umnak, Adak and Atka, to name a few; but there are thousands of rocks and islets, many of them unnamed and unmapped, dotting the seas between Unimak and Attu. Over this huge stretch of ocean the sailor is almost never beyond the sight of land.

The islands, as the names indicate, were inhabited by the hardy Aleut Indians before the Russians came late in the eighteenth century. The Indians were a tough people who were able to force

a livelihood from the barren rocks and treacherous seas that surrounded them. There is no major vegetation on the western Aleutians other than grasses and moss. The native houses are all of sod, except for the framework foraged from driftwood, or in more modern times, bought from the "post."

Wrapped in continuous fog, and swept alternately by the chill winds of the Arctic and the humid breezes of the Pacific, this is a region of dismal aspect, like the autumn heaths of Scotland, or the shores of Newfoundland Banks. Flowing close to the Aleutians is the semi-equatorial Kuro Siwo Current, once known as the Japan Current, bringing a warm "front" from the south into conflict with the icy winds of the north, and accounting for the monotonous fog, rain and snow of the region. For flying, the weather is execrable, made doubly dangerous by high mountains rising precipitously out of the sea. Veteran flyers have learned to navigate this area "by the seat of their pants"—that is, by recognition of landmarks while skimming low over the water, below fog and cloud banks.

There are some excellent harbors among these islands, the most notable being at Unalaska (Dutch Harbor) and at Kiska. All these names have already figured in the war communiqués. Kiska, one of the larger of the Rat Island group, was relatively unknown even among Alaskans, until sailors began to speak of its magnificent harbor.

The islands are mostly of volcanic origin, sheer unclothed rocks rising suddenly from the sea. Some new ones have appeared, and some have disappeared, even in our own time. There are brief stretches of level land on some of the larger islands sufficient, for instance, to form landing fields for planes as large as a Flying Fortress.

The Alaskan Peninsula, which forms the first section of this ocean necklace, is, in many respects, much like the Aleutians, although it boasts an extensive forest growth, and is more free of fog. It has little military significance in its own right, owing its chief fame to its "Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes" in Katmai



Japanese transport, hit by a U.S. Army bomber, burning and sinking in Kiska harbor.

National Monument, where great geysers of volcanic steam rise constantly from thousands of fissures in the ground, one of the world's most astounding volcanic phenomena.

South of the upper part of the Alaskan Peninsula is Kodiak Island, once famous for its man-killing bears, but now a major naval air and submarine establishment. Kodiak is one of the largest islands in these waters, almost 100 miles long, heavily forested in parts and gutted by mountains. A logical way station between Anchorage and Dutch Harbor, it is a natural strategic area. Bears still roam in its mountains, but its one-time peaceful solitude—it was headquarters for a fishing industry—is now completely blasted by the roar of planes, the cacophony of construction and the clamor of military drill.

THE PANHANDLE

Across the Gulf of Alaska from Kodiak is the last of the strategic areas, or perhaps the first from the point of view of historical development, the Panhandle. It is a very narrow strip of land, dangling down from Alaska along Canada's western coast. It looks as if it ought to belong to Canada, but it doesn't. The Panhandle is cut off from the main body of Alaska by the great St. Elias mountain range, and the connecting strip is just a few miles wide. But within the Panhandle are Alaska's main cities, containing one-third of the Territory's population, including the capital, Juneau, and the great fishing port, Ketchikan. Here, too, is Skagway, where the Klondike gold rushers disembarked for the perilous journey on foot through Chilkoot Pass to the Klondike region in Canada.

The Panhandle is Alaska's tail, which wags the dog. It isn't even a solid strip of land. It consists of ten thousand islands, fjords, canals, straits and sounds pressing up against towering snow-capped mountains, broken occasionally by a strip of coastal plain. The islands are continuous along the coast of Canada, forming the famous Inside Passage from Seattle to Juneau, 1,033 miles

of sheltered water. This entire area is extremely temperate in climate, more rainy than clear, and thickly forested with huge stands of spruce and hemlock.

One of these islands, in the archipelago named Alexander after the Tsar of Russia, was the first capital of Russian Alaska, the seat of both commercial operations and government. It was called Sitka. Today Sitka is the site of an important American air and naval base. Strategically it affords an ideal operations depot in conjunction with the other more distant points to the north and west.

BRISTOL BAY AND ARCTIC SLOPE

The two other chief geographic areas of Alaska, the Arctic slope and the Bristol Bay area, are of less military significance. They afford tremendous extremes of cold and desert aridity; there are areas in which the ground never thaws, there are others of borderless swamp, called muskeg, as treacherous as an Amazon jungle.

The one impression which this geographic outline has tried to give is the vast uncommunicativeness of one part of Alaska with the other, the great mountain barriers, the inhospitable wilderness, the churlish and foreboding swamp lands. Militarily Alaska is not one area; it is a chain of separate areas, each link essential for the successful use of the whole, but presenting tremendous problems of contact, communication and coordination. And yet many parts of the country are fertile, temperate and friendly to the inhabitants. Even the seasonally frigid regions are healthy, invigorating and amenable to human control.

FROM PETER THE GREAT TO ROOSEVELT

In the seventeenth century, the great Arctic was as much feared as it was unknown. Russia at this time was a land in ferment. A restless genius, Peter the Great, completed the destruction of the Old Russia and attended the birth of the new, a Russia which knocked loudly on the door of Europe and Asia for admission as a first-rank power.

He ordered that travel and trade be encouraged instead of punished. There developed from this encouragement the *promyshlenniki*, the explorer-traders, who pushed across Asia to the Sea of Okhotsk, and across this sea to the wilderness of the Kamchatka Peninsula, seeking furs, timbers and rare spices.

Peter the Great was curious to know what lay beyond the seas east of Kamchatka, but all the finest geographers of the European courts could not tell him. Peter was determined to learn. Moreover, he was jealous of the great wealth accumulating in the storehouses of Holland, Britain and Spain, which he had seen with his own eyes. He needed new sources of wealth to finance his many wars of territorial expansion.

Accordingly Peter commissioned Capt. Vitus Bering, a Dane who had served many years in the Russian Navy, to make the great voyage. Between 1728 and 1741 Bering and his lieutenants made many voyages of exploration in the wide waters of the Pacific, and in the sea which today bears his name. He mapped the coast of Kamchatka, sighted some of the Aleutians, the Kodiak island group, and finally in 1741 set eyes on the Mount St. Elias range, on the mainland of North America.

Peter, who died just as Bering left for his first voyage, had wanted to know whether the sea beyond Kamchatka completely divided the Asiatic continent from America. If it did, Peter reasoned, it might still be possible to discover a Northwest Passage

from Europe to Asia, which so many explorers had sought in vain. Bering never found out; but his lieutenant Chirikof, following a separate course, later sailed through the Bering Straits into the Arctic Ocean. Not until 1906, however, did Roald Amundsen make the first successful voyage through the Northwest Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

It did not take long for Bering to be followed by the *promyshlenniki*, who quickly established trading posts, fortifications and permanent settlements in the land they began to call Alaska, from the Aleut name Alaksha—the great land. There followed a century of intensive exploitation. Furs, especially seal and sea otter, were drained from all available areas; the native Aleut Indians were enslaved when they could not be exploited peacefully. The Russian-America Company was organized, and began a 75-year rule of terror, but also of construction and development of the Panhandle, Kodiak and the Aleutians. Trading posts were established along the Aleutians, and as far south as northern California. The great trade in furs became the economic life-blood of the Russian colonialism.

Meanwhile American whalers and fur traders began pushing up the Alaskan coast and establishing their own trading posts. The great liberal Tsar, Alexander II, was engrossed in land reforms, and had little interest in this land beyond the seas. Besides, Russia was licking its wounds from its defeat in the Crimean War, and was waiting its chance to have another try at Sevastopol and the Crimea.

AMERICA TAKES OVER

Russia wanted trouble neither with the British nor with the blustering young American nation, which had come out of its Civil War determined to expand to the westward. And so in 1867 Russia was glad to sell Alaska to the United States. Gone were the geopolitical dreams of Peter, who wanted to see Russia, like Britain, with a strategic fortress dominating every ocean.

But such concepts were as much lacking in the United States as they were in Russia. Alaska was considered a barren wilderness, and its purchase was looked on as an extravagant subsidy of the fur and whale trade. For twenty years after 1867 Alaska was completely neglected. It was a source of profit only to the Alaska Commercial Company, which had bought out the interests of the Russian-America Company, and continued to conduct a profitable business in fur. The few hardy trappers and adventurers who wandered into this forbidding northland lived a precarious life in tiny communities ruled not by law but by fear and by superstition. The early Russian settlers were driven out of the country.

GOLD RUSH DAYS

In 1898 came the gold rush in the Yukon, and Alaska became a highroad to fortune, as multitudes of fortune seekers plunged across Chilkoot Pass into the Yukon valley. Skagway became a great metropolis. Juneau was founded and boomed. Valdez became populous overnight. Just as the Yukon rush was subsiding, there came a great strike at Nome, and thousands of tenderfeet sailed northward from Seattle. Then gradually Nome, too, shriveled up into a village as gold mining became a restricted industry.

Between 1898 and our own times, Alaska has undergone a slow and tortured growth as a territory of the United States. Beginning with the time of the gold rushes, when Alaska was disclosed not as a frozen wilderness, but as a storehouse of unlimited riches, the Territory has ebbed and flowed in the national consciousness as a subject for Congressional investigation and debate.

Between 1898 and 1910 there was a succession of gold strikes, in the deep interior of Alaska around Fairbanks, as well as further to the west and to the south. This brought new tides of immigration, of prospectors, of traders, of gamblers, of camp followers. By the end of 1900 there were 30,500 white men, mostly



Gareloi, 5,000-foot mountain 120 miles east of Kiska, is the most active volcano in the Aleutians and at night emits a faint glow.

fortune-seekers, in Alaska, compared with 4,000 before the first gold rush. By 1910, there were 36,500. For several years thereafter, the white population plummeted downward as disgruntled miners, adventurers and idlers found no gold dust in the sands, no fortunes on the hilltops, but only hard, back-breaking and largely scientific work, requiring technical skills.

But the gold rushes had brought in a veritable tide of young writers, poets, journalists and novelists who proceeded to fix Alaska in the national consciousness past any power of recall. Rex Beach, Jack London, Robert Service and Margaret Rambeau wrote of an Alaska that was hard, brutal, but romantic—of a tremendous frontier where men were men, or died young. This picture of Alaska, while somewhat variant from fact, did much to assure the Territory of sympathetic consideration during the long lean years which followed, when the general motif was maximum exploitation and minimum regard for Alaska's future welfare.

During the beginning years of the twentieth century, hopes were bright and high for Alaska's full economic development. Inducements were offered for the construction of railway facilities in Alaska, for exploitation of its coal lands. The end result of these inducements was a series of scandals involving a New York finance combine known as the Alaska Syndicate, which was a red flag in Alaskan politics for many years.

NEGLECT OF ALASKA

Thereafter for twenty years Alaskan affairs were sporadically considered and then forgotten in Congress, as one fruitless policy succeeded another. For the most part, however, Alaska was neglected. Large-scale exploitation of the Territory was permitted, in gold and other minerals, but its coal, fish and fur resources were pretty generally guarded. Too much so, perhaps.

The federal government stepped in and built a railway from the Gulf of Alaska north to Fairbanks, after successive private

attempts failed. President Warren G. Harding drove the final spike in a ceremony in 1924 when he visited the Territory, the first and only President to come that far north. From 1924 until 1932 Alaska was pretty much forgotten. Economically it was sinking to its lowest depths. The Roosevelt administration took steps to conserve its fish resources, assist its unemployed miners and build new highways, but there was still little consideration of the Territory either as an integral part of the economic body of the nation, or as a vital military outpost.

THE COMING OF THE AIRPLANE

With the development of air transportation, Alaska's economic life took on a brighter aspect. The Territory's chief disadvantage had always been its vast distances, unbridged by highways or cheap waterways. Suddenly air transportation was infused into territorial life, and knit the huge Territory together far more closely than it had ever been before. Where the trip from Juneau to Nome had once been a matter of weeks, negotiable only during half the year, the trip by air became a daily operating route. Even cows and horses were transported into interior Alaska by air.

The development of air lines over Alaska had other, and for us today, far mightier implications. If Alaska could be knit together by air, why couldn't it become a military outpost, since it was so strategically located with regard to Asia? Air fields developed in Alaska for intra-territorial use suggested the obvious implications of military use.

Alaska, inferentially, came to sit at the table of American diplomacy. Even if Americans did not fully understand the significance of air developments, Japan and Russia did. Japan had induced the United States to include in the Naval Limitation Treaty of 1922 an agreement not to fortify the Aleutians. In subsequent diplomatic exchanges, the United States always readily agreed not to fortify any of Alaska in order not to "disturb" or to "alarm" Japan. It was also a consideration that the Russian bear

was just across the Bering Straits and might not take too kindly to fortifications established on Seward Peninsula.

Hitler and Hirohito changed all that. But not until the summer of 1940—as France fell before Hitler's legions and Japan moved into Indo-China—was work begun in earnest on the construction of Alaskan defenses. The Army moved into Alaska, and opened a new chapter in its history.

ALASKA AT PEACE

In Alaska there are approximately 80,000 people, or one inhabitant for every seven square miles. Alaskans traditionally, and very fiercely, prefer it that way, although the Territory can, and probably will some day, comfortably support a population of several millions.

Alaskans claim that they get "cabin fever"—the northern equivalent of claustrophobia—if they don't have enough room. Today the majority of Alaskans live in towns and cities, like most Americans from San Diego to Flatbush; but the tradition of the great open spaces has a profound psychological significance. Almost everybody shares this sense of expansiveness and yearning for unlimited horizons: old prospectors, grocery clerks and filling station attendants. It equips them with a wide open manner and a directness of approach which are characteristic and contagious.

There was, for instance, the soda fountain girl in a Fairbanks drugstore, who looked up one day to see Governor Ernest Gruening sitting in front of her. The Governor ordered a hot chocolate. With a disdainful glance, the waitress turned on her heel, and whispered "Sissy" in a tone loud enough to be heard in Juneau.

HANDS OFF!

Partly because Alaskans have been afraid of what the outside world would do to their pioneer spirit, partly because the prevailing economic interests are very satisfied that there should be no influx of new blood from the "outside," and partly because the "outsiders" who do come up to Alaska are often not a very inspiring sample, Alaska has been fairly content in its isolation.

Alaskan spokesmen have consistently sought to puncture the

notion that the Territory is a haven of unexploited riches, or a land of promise for the poor and the disinherited. The long-argued project for an Alaskan highway from the United States proper into the heart of the Territory has always had a tremendous amount of opposition within Alaska, from people who expressed frightened concern lest Alaska be inundated with "Okies" and WPA workers.

A prominent Alaskan attorney and politician, Grover C. Winn, told the writer in the fall of 1941: "This is a poor country, and we are a poor people. We cannot try to live like a rich country. We like it this way." Winn was complaining against proposals to levy a territorial income tax to finance an expanded program of social services; he was also greatly disturbed over the plan to settle European refugees in Alaska. Winn's comment and his alarm were typical of many similar views.

Alaskan isolation, partly enforced, partly self-chosen, is of tremendous military importance today, for military operations are made doubly difficult by Alaska's economic underdevelopment, underpopulation and lack of communications.

According to the 1940 census there were 72,524 residents in Alaska, of whom approximately 45,000 were born there. Among these there were 32,000 Indians, Eskimos and Aleuts. By now there are probably 80,000 non-military inhabitants, not counting transient defense workers.

In 1939, there were about 13,000 white residents who were born in Alaska, and another 25,000 who came to Alaska "from the outside," including a very considerable number of aliens and naturalized citizens originating in the northern countries of Europe, mostly Norway, Sweden, Germany and Denmark.

GET-RICH-QUICK

The dominant group is, of course, the white population, and especially those who have lived there twenty years or more. This elite group looks on any more recent arrival as a newcomer and



The westernmost piece of the American continent—Cape Wrangell. This picture was made by a Navy photographer on a rare clear day.

almost as an intruder. Yet queerly enough, the prevailing economic philosophy of this older group is anti-Alaskan. Their fundamental aim is to get rich quick and leave. Many of them, even those who have been in Alaska for a generation or more, still think of their home town in Minnesota, California or Kansas as their real home, and Alaska merely as a means of livelihood in which they have a strong proprietary interest.

This philosophy may account for the hardy spartan spirit of many of those early pioneers, who disdained comforts and welcomed hardship. Alaska was a working country rather than a living country. It was a waste of money, therefore, to pay taxes on social services and public luxuries such as paved streets and highways.

By 1942, frequent attacks upon this psychology had resulted in a widespread public recognition of its evils. It should be remembered that those who came to make their pile and go home, and succeeded, have largely picked up and left. The early arrivals still remaining in Alaska have been narrowed down either to those who have changed their minds about going home to the States, or to those who have failed to make good. These failures, incidentally—the miners who never struck it rich, the lawyers who never quite made the right connections, the merchants who never got located at exactly the right spot—are the bulk of the local forces of reaction.

THE PERMANENT SETTLERS

Currently the "I'm-here-to-get-mine" attitude is very unpopular throughout the Territory, even among those who consciously or unconsciously possess it. It is recognized and condemned as one of the fundamental evils of the Alaskan economy. Take, for instance, the great Kennecott copper mining company, which dug \$200,000,000 worth of copper from the ground, and when the pickings became slim, withdrew from Alaska, leaving whole towns, areas, mining camps and communities lifeless, impover-

ished, abandoned. During its tenancy in Alaska, what had Kennecott contributed to the permanent economic life of the Territory?

Governor Ernest Gruening, speaking specifically of the gold-mining industry, answered the question this way: "Every ounce of gold extracted from the rock or gravel of Alaska, once gone, is gone for all time. Its extraction will never again give employment to another worker, will never pay a cent of tax to Territory or nation. Every ounce of gold taken out of the soil of Alaska depletes the wealth of Alaska by that amount, irrevocably, finally, forever." Gruening went on to suggest that private interests exploiting non-replaceable national resources had an implied obligation to contribute heavily to the territorial welfare and the permanent well-being of the community.

Of course Alaska shares with many other regions the inclination to think largely in terms of local or state economy, rather than of national economy, and to think of wealth taken out of Alaska as completely lost to Alaska, despite its continuance as a part of the nation. Nevertheless, there is sound justice in insisting that no group of private individuals be permitted to exploit the irreplaceable birthright of future generations of Alaskans and of Americans without leaving a permanent contribution to the territorial and national welfare.

OLD-TIMERS AND NEWCOMERS

Of course, Alaska is not being exploited entirely by "outsiders." Alaska has its own capitalists, who came early, remained there, and helped to fashion the Territory in its present form. Such a one, for instance, is old "Cap" Lathrop, an amiable and generous economic pirate, devoted to Alaska, and inseparable from Alaska. He has widespread interests in everything from coal mines and movie theaters to retail stores and real estate.

There are still plenty of old Alaskans who still live in the pattern of a generation ago—following the true pioneer's life and avoiding its vices. They are the sourdoughs—the miners, hunters

and trappers who load up with supplies in the spring or autumn at Fairbanks, or at Nome, and then head into the north country for eight months or a year, depending on the weather, and come back with their "poke" of gold, or their furs, for a season of relaxation and tall story-telling.

But since 1930, approximately 24,000 new arrivals have come up to Alaska, lured by tales of the still unopened frontier, attracted by reports of high wages on defense construction projects, or just hunting work, food and adventure. Most of these new arrivals, lacking deep roots in a home soil back in the States, are determined to remain in the new Alaska and to make of it a home as desirable as California, Oregon or Washington.

These new arrivals are longshoremen, merchants, greengrocers, tailors, farmers, lawyers, doctors and unskilled laborers. They had few illusions about Alaska, and most of these men and women have been pleasurably surprised. They are helping to make of the Territory an American community, indistinguishable essentially from Minnesota or Montana, yet retaining that special flavor which, it is to be hoped, Alaska will always have.

NATIVES LIVE APART

That is the white man's world.

The natives are an Alaska apart. Where they live in the same communities with the white man, they are herded into slums, discriminated against, looked down upon. Saloons and restaurants, at least the better ones, will not serve either Indians or Filipinos. It is true that the natives are often dirty and diseased, but whose fault is it? The majority of the natives, however, live their separate lives in their own villages, under the frequently intelligent supervision of the federal government's Bureau of Indian Affairs.

There were 32,256 natives altogether at the last census: 11,283 Indians, 5,599 Aleuts and 15,576 Eskimos. They shade into each other somewhat, and are believed to be of a common origin, but



In summer, the Aleuts live in frame houses; in winter, in these underground huts. Note sea lion meat hanging on racks at left.

live in entirely separate areas, and are very distinct economically as well as physically.

The Alaskan Indians resemble our own western Indians and are more closely integrated with the economic and social life of the Territory as a whole than the other natives. They live for the most part in the Panhandle, and in the southern region of the Alaskan mainland, and are divided into very distinct tribes which have very little to do with each other. Unlike the Eskimos, the Indians are very conscious of the world around them. Today they send missions and petitions to Washington, and participate very actively in territorial politics.

The Aleuts, exploited by the early Russians, have never quite recovered from the experience. They are a people midway between the Eskimos and the Indians. Possessing neither the Eskimos' impermeability to the white men nor the Indians' fierce resistance and determination to survive, the Aleuts have fared the worst. In some of their isolated communities out along the Aleutian chain, they are fairly well off and occasionally prosperous. But in closer proximity to the white man's world, as in Kodiak and Unalaska, their lot is not a pretty one.

The Eskimos, keeping largely to their nomadic life, are the most successful of the Alaskan natives in surviving, and in preserving the dignity of their existence. They hunt and fish, live in their sod huts (not igloos), move with the seasons and know little of the world to the south of them. Their most recent source of income, as is true of the other natives of the Territory, is the manufacture of native shoes, clothes, moccasins, souvenirs and objects of art. The Army recently gave an order for 10,000 mukluks, the native boot made of the hair seal, and the Eskimos may still be working overtime on that one.

The federal government has done, on the whole, an excellent job of looking after the welfare of the natives. Perhaps it could have done better, as is loudly argued by Indian spokesmen. The government has protected the natives' land rights, staked out exclusive areas for them to fish, tried to encourage the development

of native arts and crafts, stimulated and promoted their handicraft industry, provided schools and medical supervision. In their own villages, the Indians are pretty well off. After a good fishing season, there is plenty of money for everybody, which in many cases, however, is spent in the "big town," Ketchikan or Kodiak. But the white man has much to do before he makes up for his injustices to the one-time owners of these lands and riches. At first, the white man brought the natives little but disease and vices. Reeling out of the cheap saloons found in every Alaskan village, the Indian looks very little like the noble red man.

These are Alaska's people, the tools of civilian defense—fiercely patriotic, but so isolated that they did not believe that war would come, until it came.

FISH, FUR AND GOLD

Pre-war Alaska economy was a trinity—fur, fish and gold. Other industries, such as agriculture and aviation, were comparative newcomers, although air transport may prove more important in the long run than any of the Big Three. But it was around fur, fish and gold that Alaskan economy was built, and these largely determined its political and social pattern.

Fishing was the biggest of them all. It outstripped gold and all other mining by a considerable sum. Since 1900, more than a billion dollars' worth of fish, mostly salmon, has gone into commercial markets from Alaska. In recent years, two-thirds of the world's supply of canned salmon has come from Alaskan waters. In 1940, the value of Alaskan fish products was \$38,895,000.

Fishing is carried on throughout Alaskan waters, in the Gulf of Alaska, in Bristol Bay and along the Aleutians. Besides salmon, there are sizable catches of halibut, cod and herring.

Alaska's fishermen were at war with Japan long before Pearl Harbor. Back before 1938, Japanese fishing smacks, accompanied by floating canneries, operated at full blast in the Bering banks and in Bristol Bay, taking the finest part of the catch, disrupting

the system of conservation laws painfully enforced by the United States. When diplomatic notes brought no results, Alaskan fishermen decided to take matters into their own hands. They warned that if further Japanese fishery expeditions were sighted in Alaskan waters they would be fired upon. There were no further expeditions. But the legal tangle—in which Alaskans contend that Alaska-born salmon swimming the high seas are still “American citizens”—remains to be solved.

Mining, mostly gold, is the second industry in economic importance, and the first in tradition and psychological significance. In the last sixty years, total Alaskan gold production is valued at about 600 million dollars, and all other mining output at about 275 million more. In 1940, the mineral output of the Territory was valued at \$27,549,000. Although most of the Territory's copper has been “mined out” as far as current operations are concerned, there are untapped reserves. Alaska is also an actual or potential producer of such strategically important minerals as molybdenum, antimony and nickel. Alaska's delegate to Congress, Anthony J. Dimond, is trying to get a federal subsidy for the production of tin, of which he claims Alaska has considerable quantities. There are also supposed to be important lead deposits.

At Juneau the gold industry is based on low-content ore. The operation is so efficient, however, and the volume of ore so great, that the Alaska-Juneau Mining Co. reported a profit of close to one million dollars in 1940. There still are some small mining operations, especially in the north country, where grizzled miners with sluice box or pan eke out a meager existence. Typical of these colorful “antiques” is Johnny, a Czech who operated one sluice box near Kantishna, in central Alaska. Johnny, in 1940, didn't know his homeland had been invaded.

Fur trapping and trading is the third Alaskan industry in size and importance. The fur industry as a whole yielded \$3,258,000 in 1940. The biggest part of this came from the seal trade, centered around the Pribilof Islands, 200 miles northwest of Dutch Harbor. Once threatened with extinction by uncontrolled pelagic

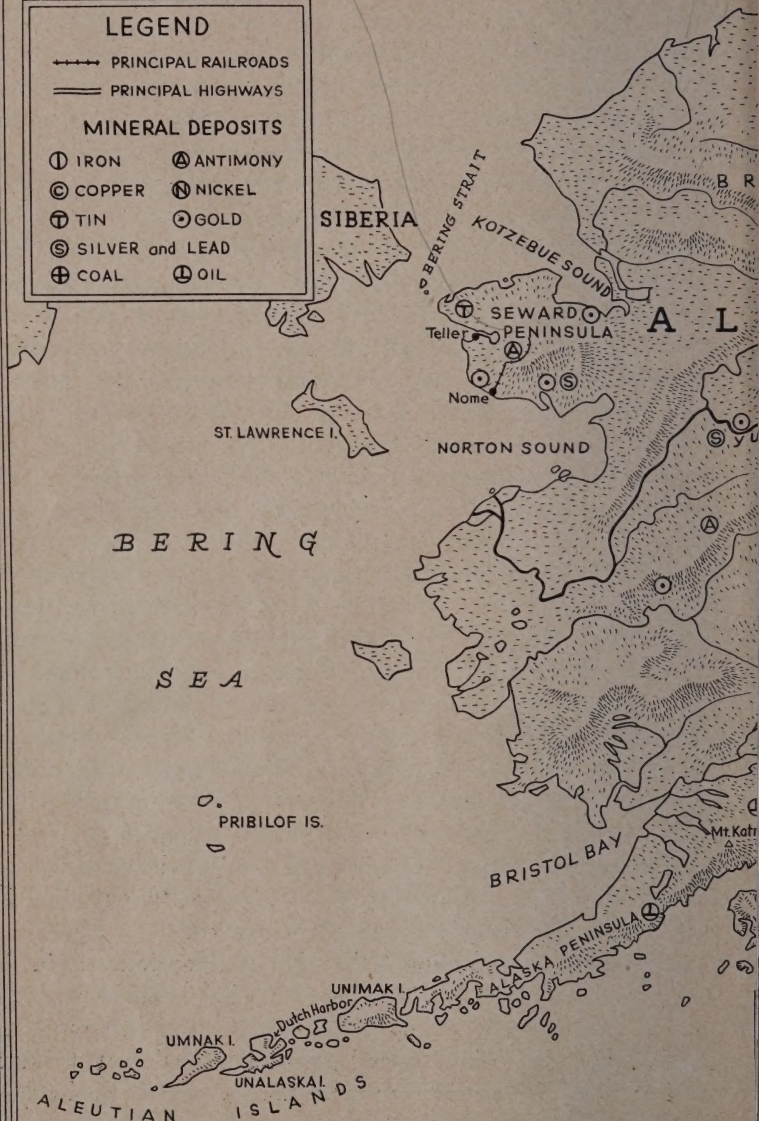
LEGEND

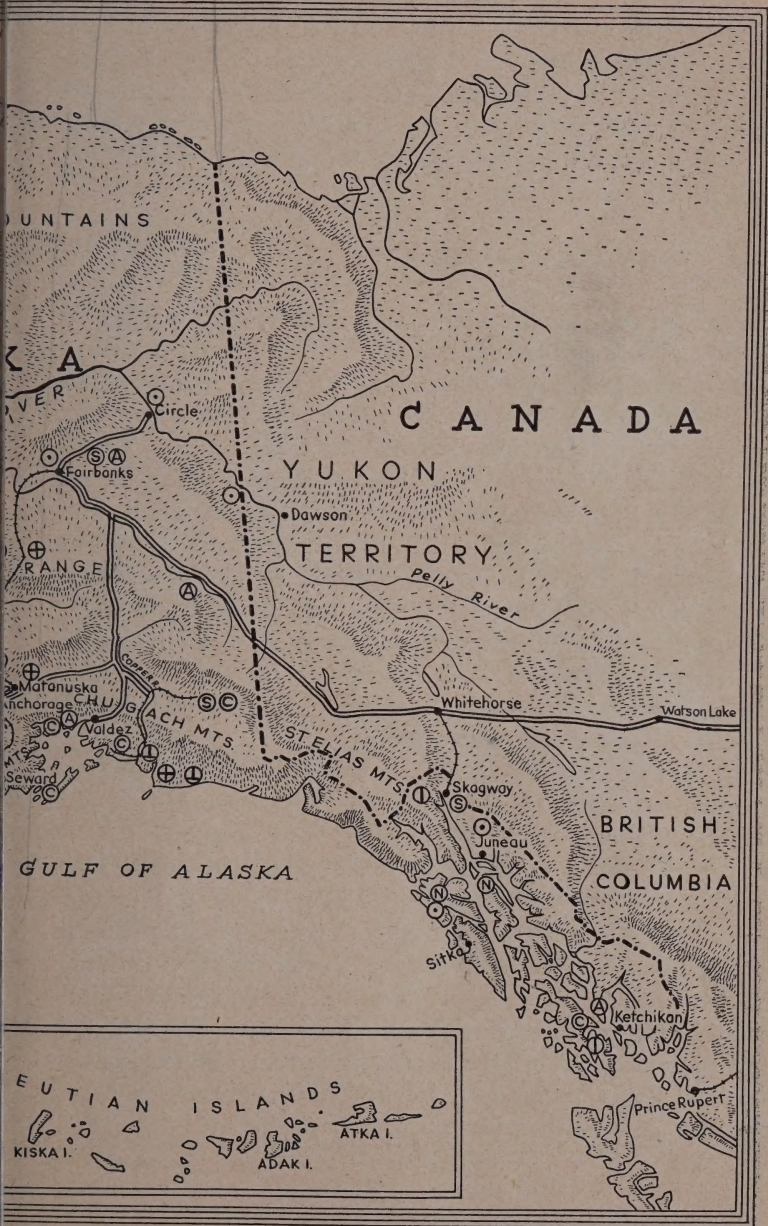
--- PRINCIPAL RAILROADS

== PRINCIPAL HIGHWAYS

MINERAL DEPOSITS

- | | |
|-------------------|------------|
| ① IRON | Ⓐ ANTIMONY |
| Ⓒ COPPER | Ⓝ NICKEL |
| Ⓣ TIN | Ⓔ GOLD |
| Ⓔ SILVER and LEAD | |
| ⊕ COAL | Ⓕ OIL |





sealing, which was ended by international agreement in 1911, the seal herd is now under the protection of the United States government. The seals, numbering 2,338,136 in 1941, gather every year at the Pribilofs to mate, and hunting is strictly regulated. Other than seal, the main components of the trade are silver fox, mink, beaver and muskrat.

WHO OWNS ALASKAN INDUSTRY?

In the last analysis, the gold-mining industry and fishing have the most significant influence, because of their greater concentration of control. Since 1900 gold mining has passed into fewer and fewer hands, until today it is in the virtual possession of two huge companies, Alaska-Juneau, and the United States Smelting, Refining and Mining Company. The majority of the workers are not the romantically irresponsible prospectors of tradition; they are wage workers, and virtually all of them are very militant members of John L. Lewis' United Mine Workers Union. Recently at Fairbanks they conducted a successful strike for higher wages.

The gold-mining industry is owned, not in Alaska, but by holding companies in Boston, San Francisco, Seattle and New York. The local management tries to lower costs and increase dividends. Its policies, as a result, are conservative.

The fishing industry presents a somewhat similar picture. Through centralized control of the packing, processing and distributing channels, the entire industry is an economic unit. It too is owned largely in Seattle, Portland and San Francisco. Even a large share of the workers for the packing and processing come up seasonally from Seattle, and go back after the season is over. Because Seattle is also the distribution center for most consumption goods destined for Alaska, and is the headquarters of transportation companies serving Alaska, it has been charged, with some bitterness, that Alaska is nothing but an economic suburb of Seattle. Labor unions operating in Alaska, and even the Navy, have had their Alaskan headquarters in Seattle.

In the fishing industry, as in mining, local management is conservative and concerned largely with profits, and very little with social implications. The result of this situation is a "united front" among the powerful economic interests, and a very successful control of most of the organs of public expression. Through a very peculiar system of legislative districting, the fishing and gold industries are usually in an excellent position to dominate the territorial legislature, as well as the local chambers of commerce and civic organizations.

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On one occasion, a territorial Senator from Nome, who was also the attorney for the big Fairbanks-Nome gold combine, speaking against a certain bill in the legislature, shouted, "My clients—I mean my constituents—want this bill defeated."

Among Alaska's other economic interests the foremost is transportation. There are only two ways of getting to Alaska—by ship and by plane. Until 1940 there was only one way, by ship. The Alaska Steamship Company, having a virtual transport monopoly, kept rates at a level to discourage steerage travel. Even the government-owned Alaskan Railway seemed to join in the conspiracy of isolation by charging six cents a mile for passenger traffic within the Territory.

AIRPORT OF THE ARCTIC

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The development of air travel, the most important innovation in Alaska up to 1939, has broken down the factors of time and distance, and thus helped to sweep away the concept of isolation. With Seattle only five hours from Juneau instead of three days, and Anchorage only a few hours more, the entire Territory was brought within a single neighborhood. Pan-American Airways, which pioneered and developed the route, has established a daily schedule from Seattle, and brought Alaska in out of the Arctic.

Within the Territory a network of airways was brought into being, linking every Alaska city with every other Alaska city, every remote area with the most populous. To accomplish this

miracle there sprang up a daring tribe of civilian pilots, to break the trails. These aerial pathfinders learned every rock, every landmark, every cranny along the coast and through the interior, until they could fly the routes in fair weather and foul, almost by "feel."

Here was a new generation of adventurers, who by their daring and resolution helped to cement the economic and social life of Alaska into an organic whole. More important still, they paved the way for recognition of Alaska's tremendous future role as the air base of the Arctic. The courage of these men has come to be legendary. No blizzard was too severe, no landing field too hazardous, for these dare-devils on an errand of mercy in their flimsy hedge-hoppers.

When war broke, most of these pilots rushed into the Army and the Navy. It was only with difficulty that an essential handful was restrained, so that civilian aviation might not be completely stripped of its personnel. When the war is over, they and hundreds of other pilots who will have learned to fly the Alaskan way will continue the job of making the Territory as compact a community as New York state. Whatever permanent economy flowers in the post-war period will have air transportation as its chief mainstay.

Even before the war, air freight was rapidly coming into its own. Everything from livestock to mine supplies was air ferried to previously inaccessible places. An Alaska which had never been able to develop the motor highways and the rail communications which characterized the industrial age in the United States suddenly found a suitable substitute. Dog teams gave way to air lines, as Alaska became completely air-minded.

CAN ALASKA FEED ITSELF?

Alaskan agriculture is also showing signs of development. Yet Alaska, with millions of acres of arable land, would starve without food imports from the "outside."

The Territory has 65,000 square miles of land suitable for intensive cultivation, but only a very minor fraction is now in production. Some Alaskans claim that it is all part of a plot to keep the Territory subservient to Seattle food exporters; at any rate, it is a fact that agriculture has long been a stepchild, and the prevailing psychology ranks farmers as members of a lesser breed. There were only 459 farms in all Alaska at the latest count.

A couple of years ago, there was the Slattery Plan. That was a project to settle Alaska with some thousands of European refugees, who would be homesteaded and set up as farmers in remote but arable regions, financed by the Intergovernmental Refugee Committee. The refugees would be admitted to Alaska outside of the regular immigration quota, but would not be permitted to re-emigrate to the United States proper. That provoked a storm of criticism in Alaska. Impartial critics damned the plan because it would establish Alaska as a refuge for refugees, outside the pale of the United States proper. But there was a far more sinister force opposed to the plan—those who feared the effects of large agricultural development, and especially the effects of a development centered around European refugees. The plan was quickly shoved into limbo.

There was previous evidence, however, that Alaska had considerable potentialities as an agricultural region. In May 1935 the WPA (then the FERA) transported into the Matanuska Valley, near Anchorage, 200 families from the relief rolls of Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, to start the great Matanuska experiment in cooperative rural rehabilitation. Today 170 families comprise the settlement and there are many judgments as to whether the experiment is a success. But the passing observer does see wide fields of waving wheat and large prosperous-looking dairy farms, serving the markets of Anchorage.

The 200 relief clients were perhaps not the best material in the world for an agricultural and social experiment, but they did show that there are untapped agricultural resources in Alaska. Wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, carrots, peas, strawberries and rasp-

berries, together with dairy products and other foods, can be raised in Alaska. There are problems of transportation, storage and marketing, but these are not insoluble.

ALASKA vs. WASHINGTON

The chief complaint made by disgruntled Alaskans against their present order is the tight control kept on Alaskan natural resources by the federal government. Congress retains itself, or delegates to the Department of the Interior, final authority over Alaskan fisheries, wild life, mineral resources and even land. The federal government owns more than 98 per cent of all lands in Alaska. Coal and oil lands are specifically reserved from commercial exploitation, except by lease in plots no larger than 2,560 acres. The federal government also controls the territorial highway system, the forests and all the navigable waters. Altogether 50 federal bureaus look after Alaskan affairs. This has resulted in a complete centering of authority over Alaska in Washington.

Some Alaskans have charged that federal control has held back the Territory's development, discouraged capital investment and forestalled individual enterprise. They point particularly to underdevelopment of coal and oil resources, to inadequate transportation facilities, and to the restricted fur industry as the results of federal domination. Had Alaska been left to the disposition of Alaskans, without federal, and especially New Deal interference, it would now be a thriving industrial area instead of a wilderness, it was charged.

The federal government, without replying directly, holds that Alaska is a national trust, and as such must be subject to federal control to a far greater extent than Hawaii and Puerto Rico. It is precisely because of the Territory's wealth of natural resources, in which the entire nation has a vested interest, that the federal administration must bear the responsibility of preventing selfish exploitation and dissipation.

But there are issues and controversies between the federal gov-

ernment and the Alaskans which cannot be explained in these terms. Take the matter of Richardson Highway and the Alaskan Railway, for instance. Both are very important today in the military strategy of Alaska. But they were originally conceived as economic and social aids for the Territory.

The railway was built in 1914-1920 by the federal government, after all private attempts had failed. It has occasionally figured in national politics when conservatives held it up as an example of that primary sin, government ownership. It runs only 471 miles from Seward to Anchorage to Fairbanks, but it is the steel artery of Alaskan commerce, and, now, of military supplies. Despite high rates, it had always operated at a loss until 1939 and the defense boom. Then the balance sheet began to show black, and the railway is now investing its profits in roadway repair and improvement.

Parallel to the railway route is the Richardson Highway, extending from Valdez to Fairbanks. It is a gravel road through the heart of Alaska, ideal for truck transport. But the Alaska Highway Commission, which built and maintains the highway, and is also a part of the federal government, charges a truck freight toll of \$9.27 per ton. The federal officials claimed the toll was necessary to equalize competition with the railway. Alaskans didn't like that. They refused to pay the toll, tore down the toll gate and locked up the toll keeper, a deputy marshal. The matter is still unsettled. That controversy is typical of those which make Alaskans mad at the Interior Department and the federal government in general.

It is true that Alaska has suffered some pretty sad maladministration. First it was run by the State Department, then by the War Department, then by the Treasury Department, then again by the War Department, and finally by the Interior Department. For many years Alaskans had no say in the conduct of their own affairs, although local miners' meetings and town assemblies took over police powers and dispensed rough-and-ready justice.

In 1912, under the "New Liberalism" of President Woodrow

Wilson, Alaskans obtained the right to elect a territorial legislature, with discretion over affairs not specifically reserved to the federal government. In 1906 they had obtained the right to send a non-voting delegate to Congress. The governor and all judges continued to be appointed by the President of the United States. Alaska has far less autonomy over its own affairs than either Hawaii or Puerto Rico. But conversely the federal government contributes much more to the support of Alaska than it contributes to the other Territories.

Under the first years of the New Deal, Alaska was fairly well satisfied with the genial but easy-going administration of John W. Troy, a newspaper editor and resident of many years' standing. Troy argued with Secretary Ickes over the matter of increasing Alaska's taxes, and Troy resigned.

GRUENING'S ADMINISTRATION

To succeed him, President Roosevelt in 1939 selected a brilliant, vigorous and militant New Dealer, Ernest Gruening. Gruening had previously served as director of the Interior Department's Division of Territories and Island Possessions, with jurisdiction over Alaska. Alaskans grumbled. Gruening was an "Easterner" from Maine and New York. Besides, he was considered a "radical" and a spokesman for Ickes—ironically enough, since Gruening is not an intimate of Ickes, and in fact the two men have had sharp differences.

The grumbling groups among Alaskans have a strong dislike for Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes. The drought and the flood, the freeze and the thaw, all disasters real or fancied which visit Alaska are blamed impartially on him. He has made some mistakes in Alaska; his best friends admit that. Nor has his attitude always endeared him to the local population. But Ickes' policies toward Alaska have in the main been intelligently directed toward the conservation of natural resources.

Since his appointment Governor Gruening has taken a strong

and insistent stand for progressive reform in taxation, land use, labor laws and conservation. He has achieved the distinction of becoming vigorously hated by Alaskan reactionaries in his own right, as well as on behalf of Mr. Ickes. However, there has gradually developed a grudging admiration for his superior mentality and ability to get things done, and he has won the enthusiastic support of a very considerable body of Alaskans, including liberal and labor elements. There is now a rather clear distinction between the right and left wings in Alaskan politics, corresponding only in part to the division between Republicans and Democrats.

Alaska has quite a collection of its own politicians, and one statesman: Anthony J. Dimond, delegate to Congress since 1932. "Tony," as he is known to all Alaska, is a true Alaskan. Born in New York state, he came to Alaska as a young man, having abandoned the study of law to make fame and fortune as a miner. He was often broke and sometimes hungry, and still remembers what it felt like. Returning to the law, he served as mayor of his home city of Valdez for fifteen years, and finally was a candidate for Congress.

From the time of his first candidacy, Dimond has been the dominant political figure of the Territory. His depth of character, honesty, sincerity and courage are acknowledged by all. He is respected in Congress as well as in Alaska. He began fighting for adequate defense forces for Alaska back in 1934, and for the Alaska International Highway at about the same time. He is a liberal by conviction, a scholar by training, and a simple man without pretense or pride. Dimond supports Governor Gruening in almost all his policies, and it is around this center that Gruening's strength has gradually begun to form.

WAR BOOM

This was the economic and political picture when the war boom struck Alaska in 1939. It began gradually at first, with a \$4,000,000 air base construction project at Fairbanks, for which

Dimond had been agitating for five years. Then suddenly came the fall of France, and the United States began to arm itself, in Alaska and elsewhere. National defense, and finally war, became the chief industry of the Territory. It is safe to guess that at least \$300,000,000 in federal money has been spent directly or indirectly within the Territory in the last three years for defense purposes.

It was the biggest bonanza that ever hit Alaska, but to old-timers it had its disturbing aspects. The hectic dollars that were pouring in tended to disrupt their familiar economic pattern. Labor became scarce and private industry found itself forced to bid against high government wage rates to obtain its once plentiful supply of seasonal manpower. Liberal forces within the Territory suddenly found themselves able to move forward without fear of stifling economic pressure. Alaska today is in ferment, and great changes are due in the economic picture.

ALASKA AT WAR

Over and over the public has heard that "Alaska is a dagger pointed at the heart of Japan." This is at once perfectly true and completely false. It is true from the facts of Alaska's geographical position; it is false in that the war found Alaska entirely unprepared for the tremendous responsibility thrust upon it.

In 1935 Gen. Billy Mitchell, stern prophet of air power, told a Congressional committee:

Alaska is the most central place in the world for aircraft. And that is true either of Europe, Asia, or North America, for in the future I think whoever holds Alaska will hold the world, and I think it is the most important strategic place in the world.

But his words went unheeded. It seemed so completely obvious to Americans that Alaska was distant, indefensible and valueless from a military viewpoint. During the twenties and thirties Congress was shy of all military appropriations, especially for remote Alaska. Until 1939 the sole military concentration in Alaska was a garrison of less than 300 men, quartered at snug Chilkoot Barracks, not far from Juneau. There was also a tiny patrol station at Sitka, and a radio set-up at Dutch Harbor.

In 1937 a naval board headed by Rear Adm. Arthur J. Hepburn made a detailed study of our naval bases, and its findings were the basis of our expansion program between 1939 and 1941. The Hepburn report said:

Naval air bases in the Alaskan area will be essential in time of war. Such bases are necessary in the patrol of the eastern Pacific and for the defense of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. . . . After careful study of all possibilities, the Board has selected Sitka, Kodiak, and Unalaska as offering the most favorable natural sites for naval air bases.



Courtesy of The New York Times

The Board recommended that the main base for maintenance and operations be located at Kodiak, rather than in the more strategic Aleutians, because of the unfavorable weather conditions in the latter area.

Kodiak was undertaken as a \$9,000,000 project, Sitka as a \$3,000,000 project. That was to have been the total of military expenditure on Alaska. But as Germany swept over France, and demonstrated in the Skagerrak and at Crete the effectiveness of land-based planes in naval warfare, as Japan moved south into Indo-China, appropriations for Alaskan defense rose to \$100,000,000, to \$150,000,000, to \$300,000,000. In March 1942 the Army suddenly endorsed the long-pending plan for an Alaskan highway.

On June 3, 1942, simultaneously with her unsuccessful attack on Midway, Japan sent a flight of bombers and pursuit planes against Dutch Harbor, the main American base in the Aleutians. The Nipponese followed up with a landing party at Attu, another at Kiska and a third on Agattu, in the western Aleutians. The Battle of Alaska began, an integral part of the Battle of the Pacific.

ALASKA IN PACIFIC STRATEGY

The Alaskan theater presents unique difficulties and unique opportunities. Both literally and figuratively, Alaska sits on top of the world. It is strategically important because of its geographical position in relation to (1) Japan, (2) Russia, (3) the Pacific Ocean, (4) the United States and Canada, and (5) the Arctic Ocean.

Its vast extent bestrides the North Pacific, Bering Sea and the Arctic. It is a peninsular approach from the North American continent to the Asiatic. It guards the vital and narrow channel between the Arctic Ocean and the Pacific. It is potentially the most convenient route for communications and supplies between North America and Siberia. It is an alternative supply route be-

STRATEGIC DISTANCES IN THE NORTH PACIFIC

From	To	Miles
Seattle	Sitka	835
Seattle	Kodiak	1,450
Seattle	Dutch Harbor	1,966
Seattle	Anchorage	1,450
Seattle	Fairbanks	1,600
Anchorage	Dutch Harbor	850
Kodiak	Dutch Harbor	600
Dutch Harbor	Attu	810
Dutch Harbor	Kiska	600
Attu	Tokyo	2,000
Attu	Paramushiro	720
Attu	Petropavlovsk	600
Petropavlovsk	Nikolaevsk	900
Nikolaevsk	Vladivostok	900
Vladivostok	Tokyo	700

tween European Russia and America, being the only habitable land mass lying on the Arctic from which air protection could be given Russian communications between Murmansk and Vladivostok.

What Gibraltar was to Britain in the last century, Alaska may be to the United States in this. For where distances were once measured in nautical miles, they must now be figured by air, over the Great Circle routes.

The table of distances given above is enchanting to amateur strategists and to some professionals. Here is a base of operations

from which Japan can be attacked by long-distance bombers (Attu to Tokyo, 2,000 miles), or, with Russia's help, by short-range bombers (Vladivostok to Tokyo, 700 miles). The Russian bases can be supplied from Attu, Dutch Harbor, Kodiak and Seattle.

It looks easy—on the map. But is it? Has Alaska the qualities needed for a base for such operations? A military base must have: (1) continuous supply lines and communications with its supply depots for reinforcements, replacements and maintenance; (2) dependable flying weather; (3) proximity to objectives; (4) forces and equipment capable of defending it against sea, air or land attack; (5) suitable coordination of command to permit perfect functioning in the face of all possible emergencies; (6) sufficient hinterland to furnish emergency supplies, and observation to guard against surprise attack.

Alaska's vast size is an important military factor. Superimpose the Army air station at Annette Island onto Jacksonville, Florida, and the Nome station would be in Minnesota, the Dutch Harbor naval post in Kansas. Alaska is not one military theater but several.

Another crucial factor is weather. It is very easy, Army and Navy men point out, to talk about launching an offensive against Tokyo from Alaskan bases, but have you ever tried flying through fog?

It is true that there are days at Attu, Kiska and Dutch Harbor when the sun shines with brilliant warmth. But aviators say that even on the most brilliant days, there is sure to be fog somewhere between Dutch Harbor and Attu, and certainly somewhere between Attu and Tokyo. Aviators fear fog worse than death. Its million particles change rapidly to ice on their wings, and force them to depend for navigation on a panel of instruments which are subject to a million minor variations in the land of the magnetic pole. Aviators will not fly through the fog if they are unacquainted with the topography of the land beneath them—the specter of a mountain looming up is a constant fear. Only stratosphere planes can conquer fog.



This picture shows the difficulty of air patrol in parts of Alaska. A Navy PBY patrol bomber is almost obscured by a snow flurry.

A military organization is no stronger than its weakest link, which is usually its line of communications to its base of supplies. Within Alaska, there is only one trunk railway, Seward to Fairbanks, and one through highway, Valdez to Fairbanks to Circle, with a newly built link to Anchorage. Southern Alaska is served by coastal shipping. Otherwise, communication between military areas is mainly by air.

Alaska's sole base of supplies is the United States, and most directly, the Western Defense Area headquarters at San Francisco and Seattle. Most supplies come by water through the "secure" Inland Waterway from Seattle to Skagway and Juneau.

AIR LINE THROUGH CANADA

Air ferry service for critical supplies and replacement is not only a possibility but a reality. Two years ago the Canadian government, envisioning an air line from the grain-rich western provinces to the population centers of Asia—by way of Alaska—set aside \$9,000,000 for the construction of airports in the center of Canada's great northwestern wilderness. These airports today constitute the pivots from which the Alaskan air ferry service operates.

The northern half of British Columbia and almost the entire Yukon Territory is a vast wilderness, corrugated with mountain ranges, carpeted with swamps and sparsely peopled with pioneers. Canadian engineers staked out within this wilderness a chain of three airports on a line from Edmonton to Alaska.

The anchor link of this chain was Whitehorse, in the Yukon Territory, just over the Canadian border from Alaska. Whitehorse is free of the soupy weather which bedevils Alaskan cities, and is the natural pivot of any airway system feeding both Alaska and Canada. With Whitehorse as its northern anchor, the Canadian air route swings high over the wilderness to a fairyland fastness called Watson Lake, then southeast to Fort Nelson, and southeast again to Fort St. John and Edmonton.

When the wind of war blew away Canada's plans for a commercial air line, these airports took on military significance. American engineers were called in for consultation, and pronounced the airports ideally situated for the purpose of an air ferry service of American planes to Alaska, and perhaps Russia.

This is one alternative, and a supplement to the sea line of supplies. The other is a motor roadway.

THE ALASKA HIGHWAY

Engineers have dreamed of the Alaskan highway as they once dreamed of the Panama Canal. The idea of slicing a motor arterial through 1,200 miles of virgin mountain and forest is a project of imaginative quality. To link the great northern frontier with California, Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and Alberta would be in a sense tantamount to the Union Pacific's feat in linking the Pacific coast of the United States with the Atlantic in the 1860's.

For the past twenty years there have been repeated surveys of this project. For some men it became a life's obsession. Such a one is Donald MacDonald, a wry, wrinkled and explosive enthusiast who has studied every foot of the way between Seattle and Fairbanks, and who believes in an Alaskan highway as most men believe in civilization and progress. MacDonald has fought tooth and nail for the highway, through lean years and fat, before Congressional committees, before Rotary and civic clubs, wherever he could get an audience.

More influential advocates of the highway were Delegate Anthony Dimond and Governor Ernest Gruening. Dimond began in 1934 and kept up a steady drumfire of discussion and argument for the highway. In 1938 the House passed a resolution creating the Alaskan International Highway Commission. The Canadians established a similar body. Its job was to survey highway routes, arrive at a cost estimate, and reach a preliminary

agreement for allocation of cost and maintenance, preliminary to actual construction.

There were surveys and meetings, and finally three alternative routes were mapped.

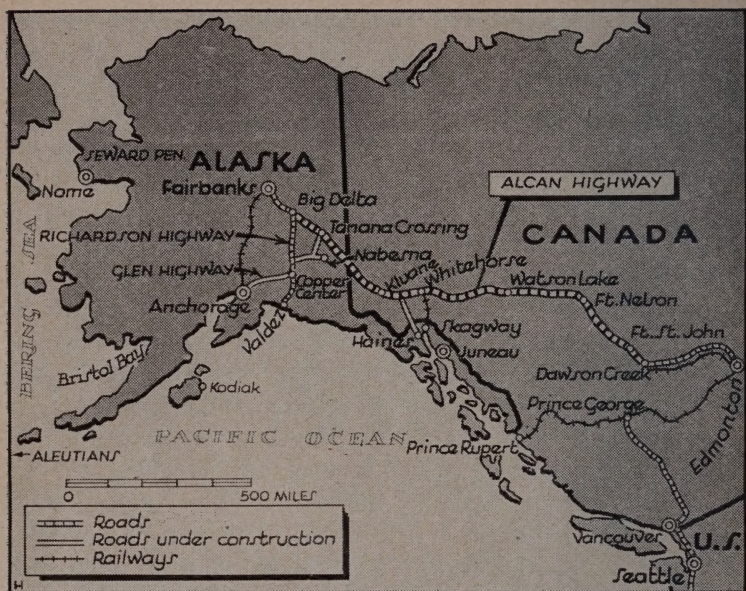
1. The "A" route, roughly paralleling the Pacific coastline, but about 125 miles inland, in the trough between the coastal range and the Rockies, heading north from Seattle to Prince George to Watson Lake to Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory, thence west to Fairbanks.

2. The "B" route, parallel with the "A" route but farther inland, begins at Prince George, runs north to Lower Post and Watson Lake up the Frances River valley over Bering Divide into Pelly River headwaters, into the Yukon Valley to the city of Dawson; uses existing road west from Dawson to "Forty Mile Country," southwest to Tanacross, thence to Fairbanks.

3. The "C" route, also called the "Prairie Route," runs through the Canadian province of Alberta to Edmonton, northwest to Fort St. John, north to Fort Nelson, to Watson Lake, northwest on a bee-line to Whitehorse, across to Fairbanks.

The American experts of the International Highway Commission decided on the "A" route because it was the shortest low-level route, and still answered what the experts thought were both military and political considerations. They estimated that it would cost \$25,000,000 and would take two years to build. They agreed to recommend that the United States government pay the original cost of construction.

After all the figures were assembled, all the charts, all the statistics, all the road maps and all the arguments, the entire project bogged down. The Army didn't want to accept full responsibility, and the Canadian government, as such, claimed the proposal was not officially before it. Finally the whole matter was referred to the joint Canadian-United States Defense Board headed by Fiorello LaGuardia, and there it rested through long months. At length Governor Gruening flew down to Washington with a new phrase. Warning that the Japanese might attack



Courtesy of The New York Times

Alaska, he called the highway America's Burma Road. He went to the newspapers, to President Roosevelt, to Secretary Ickes, to Secretary Stimson, to Secretary Knox.

Suddenly the log jam was broken. Early in March it was announced that a decision had been reached. By agreement with Canada, the United States government would build the road, which would revert to Canada after the war. Construction would start at once. Everybody was all smiles until it was known what route the Army had decided on. It was not the "A" or the "B" route, but the "C" route, connecting the three Canadian airports on the air ferry route—Fort St. John, Fort Nelson and Watson Lake.

American members of the International Highway Commission

were aghast. So was Governor Gruening. They charged that the "C" route was impractical, had never been surveyed, and would never be completed in time to be of use in the war. The Army admitted that its guiding consideration in selecting route was the desire to have the three airports linked to the supply depots in the United States. Hitherto, all supplies for these airports had had to be taken in by air.

Army engineers, on the day the decision was reached to start building the highway, sent a trainload of men up into the north country, and laid plans to push a "pioneer road" through to Fairbanks within a year. They started working at both ends, at Dawson Creek, the present railhead, near Fort St. John, and at Whitehorse. Men and machines were sped to the scene with incredible swiftness. Engineering regiments, several of them all-Negro units, performed stupendous feats of labor. There were some delays, but the work went on despite summer heat and carnivorous mosquitoes. On October 29 Secretary Stimson announced that the first trucks were moving over the road.

This seeming miracle is, of course, only a semi-pioneer road—a rough track through the wilderness, with temporary bridges and two-way traffic only in part, usable when frozen but precarious when wet. Such a road may suffice to service the airports. Much more work must be done before it can support the tremendous traffic required to send truck convoy after truck convoy roaring up to the defenders of Alaska.

And so a new plan has been hatched and has, in fact, been set on foot. This is for a railway, following generally the "B" route, north from Prince George to Watson Lake, into the Pelly River valley, through White Pass into Alaska. Surveys on this route have been made by the United States government, by arrangement with Canada. Whether the rails can be laid through this wild country in time to be of use in defending Alaska or attacking Japan, is a question which no one can now answer.

There is a third but very complicated communication route from the west coast to the armed forces of Alaska. This runs via

the Canadian National Railway to Prince Rupert on the Canadian coast; by tug and scow through 400 miles of protected waterway to Skagway; by the White Pass and Yukon Railway to Whitehorse, and thence by motor trucks for the comparatively short run (600 miles) across the Alaskan border to Fairbanks. It is a difficult and complicated route, but it may furnish a stop-gap answer to the combination problem of shipping shortage and emergency need of supplies in Alaska.

DEFENSE IN A VACUUM

As in Libya, Greenland or Ethiopia, the problem of military operations in Alaska is in large part the problem of operating in a vacuum. There are no supplies, no fuel, no food, no cities, no population. The vast interior of Alaska is as devoid of people as the Sahara, and there are great areas of coastline which are equally deserted. Few lay persons understand the tremendous difficulties of constructing a defense for a terrain which is unpeopled and unsupplied. There is no automatic warning of attack, no civilian watchers, no labor supply for the myriad of functions which must be carried out in connection with all military movements.

A foothold can be gained and consolidated by the enemy before the defender is aware. The defender, moving into a mountainous wilderness for reconnaissance or patrol, can be ambushed, his line of supplies easily severed. There are vast miles into which a tank cannot move, tremendous areas of pure morass, a type of thinly-covered ooze called "muskeg," more treacherous than quicksand, more deceptive than thin ice.

No possible concentration of troops can guard all Alaska. The only hope is to have an effective concentration at points deemed vital and strategic. Patrol can be carried out only by airplane. The difficulties of communication and supply have already been referred to. In this territory there are electric power and public utilities only at the few populated areas. Telephone systems are

local only; the radiotelegraph is the only means of transmitting messages between cities.

Espionage is another problem. In Alaska it is difficult to guard against, although all possible steps have been taken. The 200 or so Japanese inhabitants of the Territory were rounded up early in 1942 and packed off to a safe place. But Japan already had as much information as she needed about the basic establishments. And Japan has more information than the United States about the geography and coastal characteristics of the Bristol Bay area and the Aleutians—provided by Japanese fishermen who have long operated in Alaskan waters.

Although there is no longer much Japanese espionage, it is probable that the Germans have a very efficient service in this area. Their agents could pass unnoticed among the large numbers of Scandinavian fishermen who have been "beached" by the war.

MILITARY ORGANIZATION

The Army establishment in Alaska includes infantry, anti-aircraft, engineers, coast artillery and air force. Maj. Gen. Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., is chief of the Alaska Defense Command, which includes all Army units, and is part of the Pacific Coast Area Command, also known as the Fourth Army, under the direction of Lt. Gen. John DeWitt. General Buckner, a six-foot Kentuckian of aristocratic bearing, has intelligence, determination and a sound sense of strategy. His subordinates call him a strict disciplinarian.

In 1941, there were less than 40,000 troops, less than 100 planes, less than an adequate amount of guns, ammunition, fuel, gasoline and other war material in Alaska. The exact status of the Army establishment at the date of writing is, of course, a military secret. It is considerably greater and more adequate than it was in 1941. Moreover, the officers and men today are more interested in fighting the enemy than in whether they will be permitted to buy a

resident hunting license for \$1 or be forced to buy a non-resident license for \$50. Up to December 7 that was the burning issue, over which the Army was nearly ready to go to war with the Federal Fish and Wild Life Service.

In 1941 the Navy establishment was very similar to the Army's in degree of preparation. There were Marines, shore patrol and airmen. There were runways, submarine bulkheads, hangars and machine shops. A destroyer would occasionally come into harbor. But nothing was completed or occupied. The hangars were used as dormitories, and for prize-fights.

In 1941 each separate naval station was a separate command, usually under the highest ranking naval airman on the spot, a lieutenant commander or even a lieutenant. Emergency Army posts had been set up at each Navy station, often in tents because of inadequate housing and hasty planning.

The commanding naval officer of each shore establishment was under the general direction of the chief of the Alaskan section, who maintained headquarters on a destroyer which moved between Seattle and Alaska. He in turn was responsible to the commander of the 13th Naval District, Admiral Freeman.

Coordination of command was accomplished on the personal initiative of individual officers by communications between Admiral Freeman and General DeWitt, or through Washington. At Kodiak in the summer of 1941, there wasn't even a telephone connection between the local Army and Navy headquarters.

That is all changed now. A Navy rear admiral maintains permanent headquarters at Kodiak, and has command of all naval establishments in Alaska. He still, however, reports to Naval District Headquarters at Seattle.

For some reason, Alaska was not included in the series of progressive steps which the Army and Navy initiated in 1941 for the streamlining of command, such as the creation of an independent Caribbean command. After Pearl Harbor, unification of theater commands was adopted as official policy, but the Alaska command remained sprawling and decentralized. Late in July 1942,

the Navy Department announced that Army-Navy operations in the Aleutians had been coordinated and placed under the single command of the Navy. Actually that had been the case for some weeks prior to the announcement. But a completely unified system of command for all Alaska remained to be established. That may wait the transformation of Alaska from a scene of defensive operations to an offensive base. The Army would then assume a more active role than it now occupies.

Some apologists for the existing status speak of the unwieldiness of a coordinated command for a territory as vast as Alaska, for operations as varied and unrelated as Navy and Army activities in the Alaskan area often are. It is argued, with some truth, that the naval establishment in Alaska must be geared to naval operations throughout the Pacific, rather than to the military force in Alaska.

But some formula needs to be found—and unquestionably will be found—to give the northern forces the unity they need so badly. It depends, in the last analysis, on what is envisioned as the military role of Alaska. If it is to be viewed merely as a patrol point for the Pacific fleet, the answer is one thing. If Alaska is conceived as a military theater in itself, like the Caribbean, the Pacific or the Atlantic, there is only one answer—unified command.

At the present time, both the Army and the Navy have a number of vigorous, imaginative and tough-minded men heading their various establishments. These men have done a brilliant job of clearing the wilderness, building fortifications, organizing the defenses and adapting strategy to geography and topography. They have been the military pioneers.

HIGHWAY TO RUSSIA

The latest geographer's dream is a supply highway reaching from the United States to Russia by way of Alaska. This would be an all-motor roadway except for 50 miles of the Bering Straits,

which have to be crossed by sea ferry in the summer, and air ferry or ice tractor in the winter.

This project sounds preposterous and tremendous enough to be possible. From the United States it would follow the Alaska International Highway through Canada to Fairbanks in Alaska, due west to Nome, or Teller, across the Bering Straits to Siberia's East Cape. Across the level tundra from East Cape, the highway would plunge through the Verkhoyansk and Stanovoi mountains, reach the Lena River, and connect with an existing highway and railway leading to Irkutsk. Irkutsk is an important rail center on the Trans-Siberian Railway, feeding supplies both east and west to Russia and Siberia. In Canada, the road would connect up with the Canadian National Railway at Edmonton, which feeds into the United States railway system at a dozen different points. From Edmonton to Irkutsk, the distance is 5,800 miles, of which 2,150 is on the North American continent, the remainder in Siberia.

It would be a feasible project to build a "pioneer road" along this vast length, making possible land transport of supplies from Detroit and Chicago to Vladivostok, to the Manchurian frontier or to China. There are, indeed, obvious objections—the shortage of materials and road-building equipment, Russian preoccupation with war on the eastern front, the fact that a "pioneer road" would take perhaps two years to build and would be inadequate to handle any heavy volume of traffic. But the fact that such a plan is talked about shows how strongly Alaska as a route to Russia has gripped the public's imagination.

ARCTIC SEA ROUTE

In 1932 the great Russian navigator, Professor Otto Y. Schmidt, opened the so-called Northern Sea Route from Murmansk to Siberia by way of the Arctic. It is an easy extension of this sea lane through the Bering Sea to Nome, and thence to Seattle. The northern waterway already connects up with a number of Siberian

river systems, the Lena, the Ob and the Yenisei, which reach into the very heart of Siberia. These resource-rich regions might well furnish a welcome stream of precious raw materials for the munitions factories of the United States and Canada, while American supplies might be even more welcome in Siberia or European Russia. It is true that this route can sustain no large volume of traffic under present conditions, and it is open to navigation only from late June to mid-September. In a pinch, however, it might prove a lifeline.

The Arctic seaway followed past Siberia to Alaska could even utilize the Yukon River waterway for a continuous water-borne route as far south as Whitehorse, whence a short rail haul could discharge cargo at Skagway for the sea journey through the Inside Passage to Seattle. Another alternative is a highway from Nome to Fairbanks linked to the new highway across Canada. Either of these routes, though cumbersome, would be free from the danger of submarine or air attack.

IF RUSSIA FIGHTS JAPAN

Wendell Willkie's return from China by way of Nome drew public attention to the fact that air transport is now in operation between the United States, Russia and China by way of Alaska. There is little doubt in the minds of geographers and aviators that the Great Circle route to Russia and the Far East is the route of the future so far as air transport is concerned. Already it has been put to limited use by cargo planes, and it is capable of quick expansion for military purposes.

There is good reason to think that Alaska's presence as a military factor has had a great deal to do with the continuation of the armed peace which, at this writing, still exists between Japan and Russia. Japan realizes that while most eyes are turned in the direction of the Aleutians in the search for offensive possibilities against her, there are even more powerful means elsewhere in Alaska. The air route from Anchorage to Fairbanks to Nome

is a clear-weather line of supply, with uninterruptible access to the vast reservoirs of material in Alaska, Canada and the United States.

This approach, however, requires an ally, and that ally is Russia. Nome is almost 3,000 miles from Tokyo, but it is within 100 miles of Russian soil. It is known that Russia has already developed the air fields necessary to link America's newly expanded system of Arctic bases with her own air route from Siberia to Moscow. These bases could facilitate the ferrying of planes to Russia by way of Alaska, and could easily become thunderheads from which to blast at Japan, as well as bases for an air freight route to Russia.

The location of many of these Siberian air fields is a military secret, but it is known that some of them extend in suggestive directions southward of Nikolaevsk. Japan is well aware of this coincidence. The Russian bases would be in a weak position without sufficient planes and an adequate supply line. Alaska potentially offers both of these requirements. If a break should come between Russia and Japan, these air fields may be alive with planes taking off in the direction of Nippon.

ALASKA'S FUTURE

The old Alaska is gone—the Alaska of the gold rushers; the Alaska ruled by bureaucrats from Washington, and by economic “interests” from Seattle; the Alaska regarded as a minor military outpost, indefensible and valueless. The Territory has come of age, forced into maturity by the heat of war.

A new Alaska is emerging, full of possibilities, and proud of a front-rank role in national defense and in national affairs. This Alaska is still in the womb of time. Its birth depends largely on the winning of the war, and on the role played by Alaska therein. It depends on the continued and complete demonstration of Alaska's utility as pivot of the Great Circle air route to the Orient. It depends on the maintenance of economic collaboration with Russia.

Should these conditions be fulfilled, it is possible to draw a long breath and prophesy as follows:

Instead of 80,000, the new Alaska will support a population of 5,000,000 or more, drawing farmers from the dust bowl, lumbermen from the West Coast, engineers and technicians from the East, skilled workmen of all kinds. Alaska will hum with business, with industry, with commerce. There are new lands for homesteaders, bridges and roads to be built, food to be grown. Alaska can supply one-third of the nation's newsprint needs without depleting its forest resources. Salmon and other fish will still form a major industry; gold will be mined; furs will flow into world markets. But there will be other important mineral industries—coal, oil, nickel, tin, asbestos.

A network of territorial highways will connect up with the International Highway through Canada. There will be motor and rail links with Siberia and China. A shining ribbon of rail-

way will tie Alaska to the United States through the Canadian wilderness.

The Arctic will be the new frontier to absorb the restless energies of millions of men and women released from the urgencies and wastes of war.

Alaska will be a major military, naval, and air establishment commanding the north Pacific. It will constitute a "police station" for maintenance of international peace and order.

Some think this vision exaggerated. Perhaps it is; perhaps not. In any case, there is no doubt that Alaska's future will be very different from its past.



